

# Hiw language

**Hiw** (sometimes spelled *Hiu*) is an Oceanic language spoken by about 280 people on the island of Hiw, in the Torres Islands of Vanuatu.<sup>[3]</sup>

It is distinct from Lo-Toga, the other language of the Torres group.

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## The language

Hiw has 280 speakers, and is considered endangered.<sup>[4][5]</sup>

## Phonology

### Vowels

Hiw has 9 phonemic vowels. These are all short monophthongs /i ɪ e ʉ ɵ ə o ɔ a/:<sup>[6]</sup>

Hiw vowels

	<u>Front</u>	<u>Central rounded</u>	<u>Back</u>
<u>Close</u>	<span>i</span> <span>i</span>	<span>ʉ</span> <span>u</span>	
<u>Near-close</u>	<span>ɪ</span> <span>ē</span>		
<u>Close-mid</u>	<span>e</span> <span>ĕ</span>	<span>ɵ</span> <span>ö</span>	<span>o</span> <span>ō</span>
<u>Mid</u>		<span>ə</span> <span>e</span>	
<u>Open-mid</u>			<span>ɔ</span> <span>o</span>
<u>Open</u>	<span>a</span> <span>a</span>		

Hiw	
Native to	Vanuatu
Region	Hiw
Native speakers	280 <span> </span> (2012) <sup>[1]</sup>
Language family	<div>Austronesian<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li> Malayo-Polynesian<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Oceanic<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Southern Oceanic<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Vanuatu<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>North Vanuatu<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Torres–Banks<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>Hiw</b></li></ul></li></ul></li></ul></li></ul></li></ul></li></ul></li></ul></div>
Language codes	
ISO 639-3	hiw
Glottolog	hiww1237 <span> </span> (http://glottolog.org/resource/language/id/hiww1237) <sup>[2]</sup>

## Consonants

Hiw has 14 consonants.<sup>[6]</sup>

Hiw consonants

	<u>Bilabial</u>	<u>Alveolar</u>	<u>Palatal</u>	<u>Velar</u>	<u>Labialized velar</u>
<u>Plosive</u>	p p	t t		k k	k <sup>w</sup> q
<u>Nasal</u>	m m	n n		ŋ ñ	ŋ <sup>w</sup> ñw
<u>Fricative</u>	β v	s s		ɣ g	
<u>Prestopped lateral</u>				ɡ̟ ɣ̟	
<u>Glide</u>			j y		w w

All plosives are voiceless. Hiw is the only Austronesian language whose consonant inventory includes a prestopped velar lateral approximant /ɡ̟/; this complex segment is Hiw's only liquid.<sup>[7]</sup> Historically, this complex segment was a voiced alveolar trill /r/ (which is why it is written as ɣ̟). The voiced alveolar trill, spelt as *r*, appears in recent loanwords.

## Grammar

In terms of lexical flexibility, Hiw has been assessed to be “grammatically flexible”, but “lexically rigid”.<sup>[8]</sup> The vast majority of the language's lexemes belongs to just one word class (noun, adjective, verb, adverb...); yet each of those word classes is compatible with a large number of syntactic functions.

The language presents various forms of verb serialization.<sup>[9]</sup>

Its system of personal pronouns contrasts clusivity, and distinguishes three numbers (singular, dual, plural).<sup>[10]</sup>

Together with its neighbour Lo-Toga, Hiw has developed a rich system of verbal number, whereby certain verbs alternate their root depending on the number of their main participant.<sup>[11]</sup> Hiw has 33 such pairs of verbs, which is the highest number recorded so far among the world's languages.<sup>[11]</sup>

Spatial reference in Hiw is based on a system of geocentric (absolute) directionals, which is partially typical of Oceanic languages, and partially innovative.<sup>[12]</sup>

## References

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4. François (2012:100).
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6. François (2010a:396)
7. François (2010a)

8. François (2017).
9. François (2017: 311 sqq).
10. François (2016).
11. François (2019).
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## External links

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- Linguistic map of north Vanuatu, showing range of Hiw ([http://alex.francois.online.fr/AlexFrancois\\_Torba-languages\\_map.htm](http://alex.francois.online.fr/AlexFrancois_Torba-languages_map.htm)).

- Audio recordings in the Hiw language ([https://pangloss.cnrs.fr/corpus/list\\_rsc\\_en.php?lg=Hiw](https://pangloss.cnrs.fr/corpus/list_rsc_en.php?lg=Hiw)), in open access, by A. François (source: *Pangloss Collection*).

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